



An Invitation to Contribute Water Quality Monitoring Data for the Characterization of the Commonwealth of Virginia's Surface Waters

The Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) periodically carries out an integrated assessment of water quality conditions [biennial 305(b) Report] and a listing of impaired waters [associated 303(d) Report] in the Commonwealth, as required by Sections 305(b) and 303(d), respectively, of the federal Clean Water Act. Although state and federal agencies provide the majority of the water quality monitoring data used to produce these reports, we at DEQ realize that many other sources of water monitoring information exist throughout our state. Water quality data collected by citizen's (volunteer) monitoring groups, universities, local governments, utility companies and industry, as well as other state and federal agencies, may be helpful in improving the geographic coverage and completeness of our statewide assessment, or in aiding DEQ to identify and more intensively study localized water quality problems.

DEQ invites those of you that have such data, and that are interested in contributing to the Commonwealth's water quality evaluations but have not already done so, to contact one of the agency's representatives listed below.

Please keep in mind that DEQ requires stringent adherence to documented Quality Assurance / Quality Control (QA/QC) protocols prior to accepting and using any water quality data, regardless of source! To be useful, data must be representative of the water body of interest; it should consist of multiple, independent observations characterizing daily and seasonal variations in water quality!

Guidance for the preparation of Quality Assurance Project Plans (QAPP's), to document QA/QC protocols, is available from the US EPA Website at <http://www.epa.gov/quality/qapps.html>. Additional information about quality assurance / quality control requirements for citizen monitoring and guidance for the preparation of QAPP's can be found in the new edition of the Virginia Citizen Water Quality Monitoring Program Methods Manual, now available at <http://www.deq.state.va.us/cmonitor/>.

Citizen Monitoring Groups - Please visit the DEQ Citizen Monitoring Website at <http://www.deq.state.va.us/cmonitor/> or contact DEQ's Citizen Monitoring Coordinator:

Joyce F. Brooks
jfbrooks@deq.state.va.us
(804) 698-4026

305(b) / 303(d) Reports

For the purpose of 305(b) and 303(d) Reports, DEQ is specifically interested in measurements of water quality characteristics that can be compared directly to values or criteria published in Virginia's Water Quality Standards (9 VAC 25-260-5 *et seq.*, under Statutory Authority of § 62.1-44.15(3a) of the Code of Virginia). The current edition of the standards is available on the DEQ Website at <http://www.deq.state.va.us/wqs/>. Commonly measured characteristics in this group of water quality parameters are water temperature, dissolved oxygen, pH, and bacterial concentrations (*E. coli*, *Enterococci* or fecal coliform bacteria). Measures of additional water quality parameters, such as nutrients (ammonia, total nitrogen and/or total phosphorus), chlorophyll, and/or benthic invertebrate communities, may also be useful in evaluating the quality of the State's waters.

The agency will not accept data for 305(b) assessment purposes unless DEQ's Quality Assurance Officer has previously approved a Quality Control Project Plan (QAPP) for its collection. Acceptance of data also requires the use of standard operating procedures for sample collection and laboratory analyses that follow EPA-approved or American Public Health Association (APHA) Standard Methods. Guidance for the preparation of QAPP's is available via the US EPA Website at <http://www.epa.gov/quality/qapps.html> or from DEQ's Quality Assurance Officer:

Gary Du
tdu@deq.state.va.us
(804) 698-4189

If your monitoring group already has a DEQ-approved QAPP in place, please contact the agency's Assessment Coordinator:

Harry Augustine
hhaugustine@deq.state.va.us
(804) 698-4037

For 305(b)/ 303(d) Reports subsequent to 2004, DEQ intends to begin utilizing a six-year monitoring period for assessment purposes. This assessment 'window' would correspond to the six most recent of the state's fiscal years (July 1st through June 30th of the following year). To be utilized for the 305(b) Report, data collected under an agency-approved QAPP must be collected during the designated six-year period and submitted to DEQ no later than December 31st of the last year of that assessment window. For example, if a 305(b) Report were to assess the period from July 1, 1998 through June 30, 2004, any water quality data collected during that period would need to be submitted to the agency by December 31, 2004. Water quality monitoring groups should contact the DEQ Citizen Monitoring Coordinator, listed above, to confirm the relevant dates for data collection and submission prior to shipping data to the agency.